

June 22, 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR P - MR. BARRETT

Following are some questions dealing with the establishment of the Psychological Strategy Board that you may wish to use as a basis for briefing Mr. Webb:

1. Pitfalls to be avoided as the new Board takes shape

a. A possible tendency to expand the Board's area of responsibility to encompass detailed policy planning and coordination of current operations, thus preventing it from devoting its full time to the long-range strategic planning which is so badly needed in the psychological field.

b. A tendency may develop to create a large staff under the director which would increasingly concern itself with problems which are now being adequately managed by similar staffs in existing agencies. In this connection it should be noted that one of the proposed tables of organization submitted to the Board includes a staff section dealing with current plans and programs.

c. The provision made in the President's Directive for a full-time advisor to PSB from the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be helpful, but care should be taken that State Department responsibilities are equally well represented within the Board and its Secretariat.

d. It would not appear to be sufficient for the Board to agree only that it will not concern itself with psychological "operations." The type of planning which the Board will do should also be defined in order that the work of the Director and his staff does not overlap the kind of specific planning now being adequately provided by other agencies.

Psychological planning directly relating to conduct of current foreign policy should remain a responsibility of the State Department P Area. Forward looking planning against the event of a general war, or planning for operations involving several agencies, should be the responsibility of the Board. The Board should also concern itself with plans for operations which involve activities extending beyond propaganda. It should also provide a channel for screening of national projects in the psychological field before they are presented to the National Security Council.

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e. Careful note should be taken of the comments made by Mr. Howland Sargeant attached to General Magruder's paper on the Board's charter and table of organization. Mr. Sargeant pointed out that to impose a large super-structure on top of the officers and personnel now responsible for psychological plans and implementation, and to remove many of their functions, could "deal a serious blow to the morale of persons now engaged in psychological operations and in the end result in diminishing rather than increasing the efficiency of their work." Further, this super-structure is vulnerable to Congressional attack on the appropriations front. This attack on overhead organization has already been laid against the USIE program.

2. Possibilities inherent in the new Board

a. The existence of an interdepartmental psychological organization at the level contemplated should make it possible for the State Department and other agencies engaged in psychological operations to get more prompt approval of psychological plans and programs at the government level. One of the difficulties of the present Psychological Operations Coordinating Board has been the inability of some members to commit their agencies to plans and programs which they personally approve.

b. The added prestige the Board will give to psychological operations may generally facilitate State Department operations in this field. The prestige of the Board should also improve present understanding of the necessity for psychological plans and operations on the part of Congress and the people. The Board can give valuable support in promoting future Departmental recommendations for psychological appropriations and/or personnel.

c. By raising the status of the psychological program to a higher level within the government, current political criticisms may be alleviated and a higher caliber of personnel attracted to the work.

d. The Board presumably will be able to call on the best brains in the country to engage in psychological studies. Particular attention is called to the recommendation of the working group chaired by Mr. Allen W. Dulles that a team of experts in this field be called together to work on a program of "psychological grand strategy" outside of Washington sometime this summer. The findings of such a group could be of considerable value to the State Department and the government as a whole in the accomplishment of its work during 1951-52.

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3. Administrative questions that will arise

a. Should the Board have a contributed staff?

Recommendation: At least for the first few months it appears there is no alternative to a contributed staff, since the hiring of outside personnel requires a long period of security clearance. Furthermore, there are very few individuals in or out of the government possessing a substantial background in this work. I believe that the State Department should consider making available to the Board's staff at least one officer of highest caliber and prestige in order to insure a degree of State Department initiative within PSB commensurate with our present responsibilities in the psychological field.

b. Where should the new Board be housed?

Recommendation: It is doubtful whether physical location in the CIA offices would be advisable in view of the public attention which would be called to that agency. The Board might better be housed in an independent "neutral" building unaffiliated with any agency.

c. How will the Board's work be supported within the Department of State?

Recommendation: An officer on Mr. Barrett's staff should be designated for full-time liaison with the Board, and charged with the responsibility of coordinating, and in some cases preparing, material to be presented to the Board. This officer should also be responsible for seeing that work delegated by the Board to the State Department is carried out. The officer in question should maintain closest possible liaison with the State Department member or members of the PSB staff.

d. Priority projects for the Board's attention.

The working group under Mr. Dulles has prepared a detailed list of suggestions to which the Board might give priority attention. It is recommended that Mr. Webb call these projects to the attention of the Board at the earliest possible date.

V. P. Wilber

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